

## Examples of Service-Learning Activities

Students and teachers have opportunities throughout the activities and at the end to reflect on their service-learning experiences.

**Elementary Grades:** Fourth-grade students, some of whom are reading below grade level, buddy with first graders for one-on-one reading. The fourth-grade teacher instructs her students in several simple reading strategies, such as picture cues and letter-sound correspondence. The fourth graders must select age-appropriate books that are of interest to their buddies, practice reading the book in an interesting way, and define vocabulary words that may be difficult for the younger child. The students meet weekly for their Book Buddy sessions.

**Middle Grades:** Middle school students work in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service to conduct an in-depth study of a nearby watershed as part of their science curriculum. The students identify what constitutes a healthy watershed and, with the help of the teachers and volunteer biologists, hydrologists, and environmental engineers, design a rehabilitation plan to restore degraded areas of the watershed. In their language arts classes, students develop articles and public service announcements to educate the greater community and highlight the importance of environmental sensitivity.

**High School:** Students in advanced Spanish courses practice second-language acquisition, writing, and speaking skills while volunteering at local health care facilities and human service agencies that primarily serve Spanish-speaking clients. Students serve as translators and assist clients by helping them complete registration forms and by providing instructions and information related to their care and treatment.

## Definition of Service-Learning

Service-learning is an instructional reform strategy that actively involves youths in academic programs through service to their communities. The term “service-learning” means a method–

(A) under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that–

- (i) is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;
- (ii) is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program, and with the community; and
- (iii) helps foster civic responsibility; and

(B) that–

- (i) is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and
- (ii) provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience.

— *National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended (42 U.S.C. 12501, et seq.)*

*Service-learning makes academic content come alive as students apply their knowledge and skills to real-life situations. Students become more engaged in their studies and see that they can make a difference. Taking an active role in addressing community needs fosters responsible citizenship and contributes to character development.*

—Jack O’Connell  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

## CalServe Initiative



### Learn and Serve America K–12 Service-Learning

The National and Community Service Trust Act was signed into law in 1993. This federal act provides funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service in Washington, D.C.

**Learn and Serve America**, the K–16 arm of the corporation, is a federal grants program. It seeks to promote youths as resources through service-learning activities that address local priorities in the areas of education, public safety, the environment, health, and human needs.

Currently, Learn and Serve America school-based programs involve more than a million youths nationwide.

**California Department  
of Education**



## The CalServe Initiative's Statewide Strategies



In California, the Department of Education's CalServe Initiative provides direct funding assistance to school-community partnerships and involves more than 120,000 students and 15,000 community volunteers and agencies in urban, rural, and suburban communities throughout the state.

**CalServe partnerships** of local educational agencies and community-based organizations receive funds through competitive applications to support districtwide implementation of service-learning. These school-community partnerships provide high-quality service-learning activities at each grade span (elementary, middle, and high school).

**Regional service-learning leads** provide opportunities for California's K-12 educators and community partners to come together in regions to learn and share ideas about how to design, implement, and support service-learning. For more information contact Youth Service California at (510) 302-0550 or <http://www.yscal.org>.

**State and national partners** and CalServe have a long history of working together to promote the use of service-learning in schools and communities. CalServe also works with institutions of higher education through ongoing teacher education and teacher preparation programs. All these partners are committed to the challenge of integrating service-learning into the culture of California's educational system by using a wide range of activities and strategies.

**Service-Learning: Linking Classrooms and Communities**, the report of the Superintendent's Service-Learning Task Force, contains the following recommendations:

- ★ Develop policies and plans to ensure that all students have academically meaningful, sequential, and sustained service-learning experiences throughout their schooling.
- ★ Link service-learning to state and local standards, assessments, and accountability tools.
- ★ Work collaboratively with community partners and national service providers, such as **AmeriCorps** and **VISTA**, to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear, service is meaningful, and all partners are committed to success.



- ★ Give youth a voice in their education by involving them fully in planning, implementing, and evaluating all service-learning activities.
- ★ Establish a local service-learning advisory committee or include service-learning representatives on existing school and district advisory committees.
- ★ Provide ongoing training and professional development for teachers, administrators, community partners, students, and family members so that everyone understands service-learning.
- ★ Provide adequate funding, resources, and time to infuse service-learning fully in schools and communities.
- ★ Include service-learning as a vital instructional strategy in teacher education programs.

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